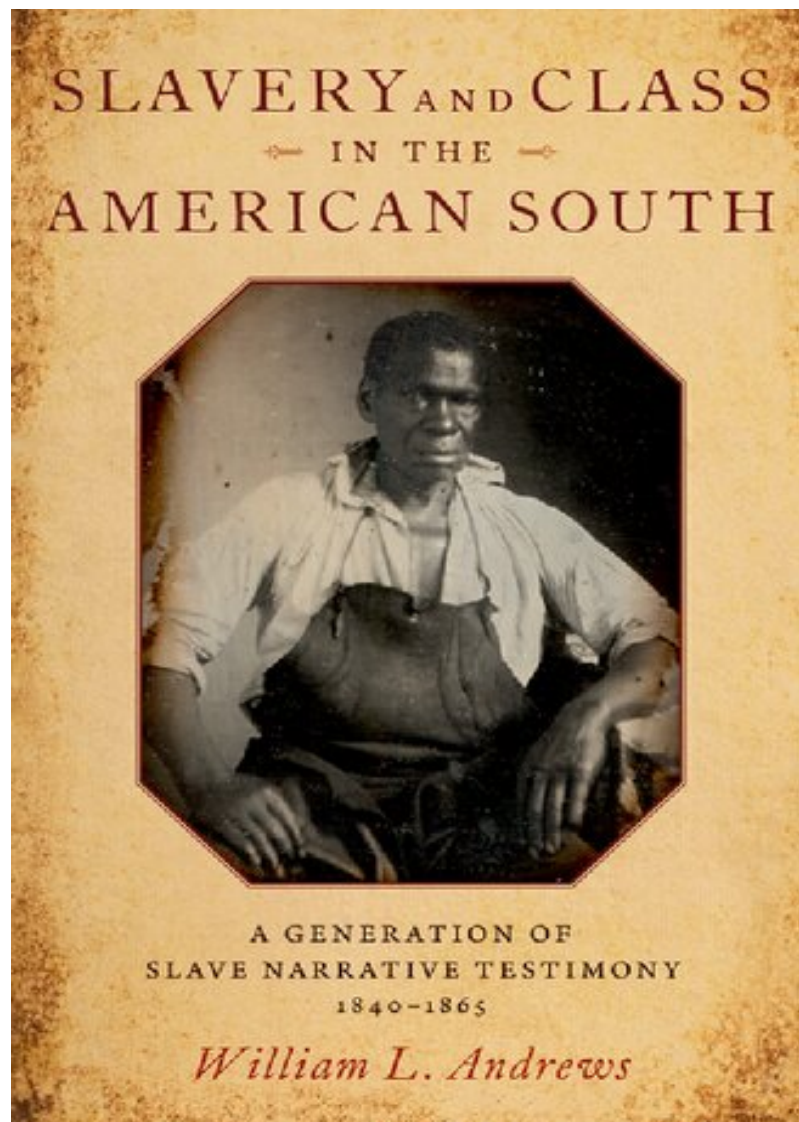


Slavery and Class in the American South: A Generation of Slave Narrative Testimony, 1840-1865 William L. Andrews pdf download

<https://ebookmass.com/product/slavery-and-class-in-the-american-south-a-generation-of-slave-narrative-testimony-1840-1865-william-l-andrews/>

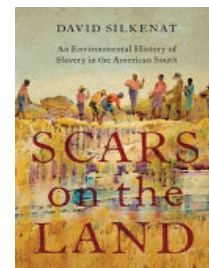


Explore and download more ebooks at ebookmass.com

We have selected some products that you may be interested in
Click the link to download now or visit ebookmass.com
for more options!.

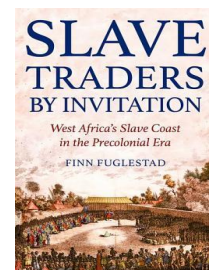
Scars on the Land. An Environmental History of Slavery in the American South David Silkenat

<https://ebookmass.com/product/scars-on-the-land-an-environmental-history-of-slavery-in-the-american-south-david-silkenat/>



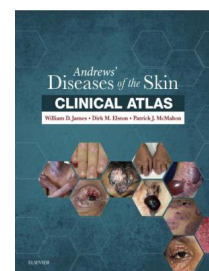
Slave Traders by Invitation: West Africa in the Era of Trans-Atlantic Slavery Finn Fuglestad

<https://ebookmass.com/product/slave-traders-by-invitation-west-africa-in-the-era-of-trans-atlantic-slavery-finn-fuglestad/>



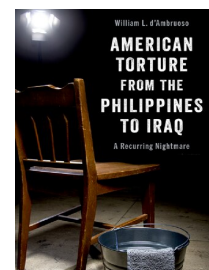
Andrews' Diseases of the Skin Clinical Atlas by William James, Dirk Elston, Patrick McMahon Andrews' Diseases Of The Skin Clinical Atlas By William James

<https://ebookmass.com/product/andrews-diseases-of-the-skin-clinical-atlas-by-william-james-dirk-elston-patrick-mcmahon-andrews-diseases-of-the-skin-clinical-atlas-by-william-james/>



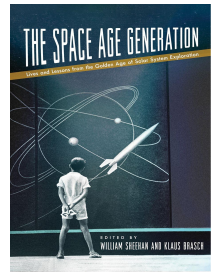
American Torture from the Philippines to Iraq: A Recurring Nightmare William L. D'Ambruoso

<https://ebookmass.com/product/american-torture-from-the-philippines-to-iraq-a-recurring-nightmare-william-l-dambruoso/>



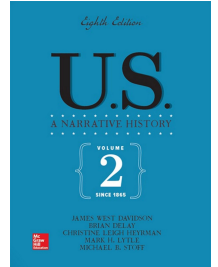
The Space Age Generation William Sheehan

<https://ebookmass.com/product/the-space-age-generation-william-sheehan/>



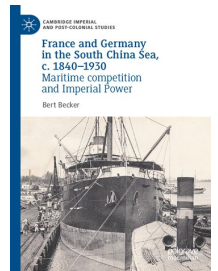
US: A Narrative History, Volume 2: Since 1865 James West Davidson & Brian Delay [Davidson]

<https://ebookmass.com/product/us-a-narrative-history-volume-2-since-1865-james-west-davidson-brian-delay-davidson/>



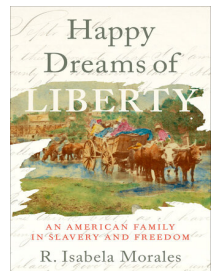
France and Germany in the South China Sea, c. 1840-1930: Maritime competition and Imperial Power Bert Becker

<https://ebookmass.com/product/france-and-germany-in-the-south-china-sea-c-1840-1930-maritime-competition-and-imperial-power-bert-becker/>



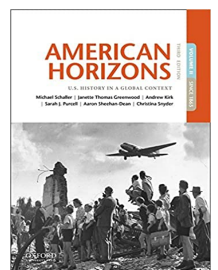
Happy Dreams of Liberty: An American Family in Slavery and Freedom R. Isabela Morales

<https://ebookmass.com/product/happy-dreams-of-liberty-an-american-family-in-slavery-and-freedom-r-isabela-morales/>



(eBook PDF) American Horizons: U.S. History in a Global Context, Volume II: Since 1865 3rd Edition

<https://ebookmass.com/product/ebook-pdf-american-horizons-u-s-history-in-a-global-context-volume-ii-since-1865-3rd-edition/>



SLAVERY_{AND} CLASS

— IN THE —

AMERICAN SOUTH



A GENERATION OF
SLAVE NARRATIVE TESTIMONY
1840-1865

William L. Andrews

Slavery and Class in the American South

Slavery and Class in the American South

*A Generation of Slave Narrative Testimony,
1840–1865*

WILLIAM L. ANDREWS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.

© Oxford University Press 2019

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted by law, by license, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reproduction rights organization. Inquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above.

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Andrews, William L., 1946– author.

Title: Slavery and class in the American South : a generation of slave narrative testimony, 1840–1865 / William L. Andrews.

Description: New York, NY : Oxford University Press, [2019] |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018028428 (print) | LCCN 2018048437 (ebook) |

ISBN 9780190908393 (Updf) | ISBN 9780190908409 (Epub) |

ISBN 9780190908386 (hardcover : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Slaves' writings, American—History and criticism. |

Slaves—Southern States—Biography—History and criticism. |

African Americans—Southern States—Biography—History and criticism. |

Slaves—Southern States—Social conditions—19th century. |

Slavery—Southern States—History—19th century.

Classification: LCC E444 (ebook) | LCC E444 .A53 2019 (print) |

DDC 306.3/62097509034—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018028428>

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Printed by Sheridan Books, Inc., United States of America

to Norah and David

The distinction among slaves is as marked, as the classes of society are in any aristocratic community. Some refusing to associate with others whom they deem beneath them in point of character, color, condition, or the superior importance of their respective masters.

—Henry Walton Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (1849)

There is no doubt that Nelly felt herself superior, in some respects, to the slaves around her. She was a wife and a mother; her husband was a valued and favorite slave. Besides, he was one of the first hands on board of the sloop, and the sloop hands—since they had to represent the plantation abroad—were generally treated tenderly. The overseer never was allowed to whip Harry; why then should he be allowed to whip Harry's wife? Thoughts of this kind, no doubt, influenced her; but, for what ever reason, she nobly resisted, and, unlike most of the slaves, seemed determined to make her whipping cost Mr. Sevier as much as possible.

—Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855)

These fugitives may be thought to be a class of poor, thriftless, illiterate creatures, like the Southern slaves, but it is not so. They are no longer slaves; many of whom have been many years free men, and a large number were never slaves. They are a hardy, robust class of men; very many of them, men of superior intellect; and men who feel deeply the wrongs they have endured.

—Austin Steward, *Twenty-Two Years a Slave, and Forty Years a Freeman* (1857)

The months passed on. I had many unhappy hours. I secretly mourned over the sorrow I was bringing on my grandmother, who had so tried to shield me from harm. I knew that I was the greatest comfort of her old age, and that it was a source of pride to her that I had not degraded myself, like most of the slaves.

—Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)

CONTENTS

Preface ix

Acknowledgments xiii

Introduction: Slaves and Privileges 1

1. Emerging Class Awareness 26

2. Work, Status, and Social Mobility 63

3. Class and Conflict: White and Black 168

4. The Fugitive as Class Exemplar 248

Epilogue: “The record of which we feel so proud to-day” 317

Appendix: African American Slave Narratives, 1840–1865 323

Notes 329

Index 373

PREFACE

I was born in Richmond, Virginia, in 1946, in a hospital on Monument Avenue named in honor of Robert E. Lee's cavalry commander, James Ewell Brown "Jeb" Stuart. Among my paternal and maternal forbears are more men who fought for the Confederacy than I can easily count. Half of my great-great-grandfathers were slaveholders; the others, as far as I can tell, weren't. In the 1860 US census, Edwin Garnett Andrews (1805–1861), who farmed in Caroline County, Virginia, claimed 6 human beings, ranging in age from 4 months to 53 years, as his property. John Ferneyhough Jr. (1788–1860), a prosperous coach-maker, enjoyed the profits of a small estate near Fredericksburg, Virginia, maintained by 16 men and women whom he enslaved. In 1835, Ferneyhough joined an anti-abolition vigilance committee in Fredericksburg, the purpose of which, according to a local newspaper, was "to aid the Civil Authorities, in detecting and bringing to justice, the abolitionists . . . engaged in disseminating their nefarious publications and prosecuting their incendiary projects."

These two great-great-grandfathers of mine would have never imagined that a descendant of theirs would one day devote almost forty years of his life to studying and reprinting "nefarious publications" of American abolitionism that Ferneyhough and his committee tried to criminalize and suppress. Though undoubtedly an outrage to slaveholders like Ferneyhough, the narratives of former slaves who testified against chattel slavery have become for me the most instructive and inspiring, albeit often appalling, human documents ever produced by the antebellum South. From these narratives I've realized that along with democracy, capitalism, Protestant Christianity, and marriage, slavery was so powerful and pervasive as to constitute one of the five fundamental institutions that defined the United States at its inception.

The basic political institution of the United States has always been representative democracy. But in a country that from its founding denied the franchise to anyone who was enslaved—and, in some antebellum Northern states, to anyone

Visit <https://ebookmass.com> today to explore

a vast collection of ebooks across various genres, available in popular formats like PDF, EPUB, and MOBI, fully compatible with all devices. Enjoy a seamless reading experience and effortlessly download high-quality materials in just a few simple steps. Plus, don't miss out on exciting offers that let you access a wealth of knowledge at the best prices!

of African descent—the new nation’s experiment in representative democracy was imperiled from the outset. The notorious “three-fifths compromise” of 1787, by which the slave states were permitted to count each enslaved individual in their population as three-fifths of a person for the purposes of congressional apportionment, perverted the Constitution of the United States into a pro-slavery document. The author of the first fugitive slave narrative in American history, my fellow Virginian William Grimes, closed his 1825 autobiography with a sardonic offer: he would leave his whip-scarred skin “a legacy to the government, desiring that it might be taken off and made into parchment, and then bind the constitution of glorious happy and *free* America.”

In economics, the defining institution of the United States is capitalism. But before the Civil War, free enterprise and free markets had little meaning to enslaved African Americans, despite the fact that their minds and bodies were the most profitable commodities made in America. In 1849 Kentucky fugitive Henry Bibb diagnosed the power of rich slaveholders over the “poor laboring man” who “whether he be moral or immoral, honest or dishonest . . . white or black; if he performs manual labor for a livelihood,” he is “but little better off than the slave, who toils without wages under the lash.” Profoundly dependent on a self-perpetuating caste of lifelong unpaid labor, Southern slaveholders and Northern industrialists allied to pit Southern working-class whites and enslaved blacks against each other throughout the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries.

American religious life at the founding of the United States was cast in the mold of Protestant Christianity. The basic tenet of Protestantism was and is the priesthood of all believers. In its most radical form, this revolutionary idea prescribed literacy for the laity so that each Christian could read the Bible and become his or her own interpreter of the Scripture. In the Southern slaveocracy, however, especially after the Nat Turner revolt of 1831, the idea of slaves’ reading and interpreting the Bible freely was anathema. In his 1860 narrative, fugitive James Watkins denounced Southern ministers for declaring “that it would not do to give [the enslaved] the Bible” because “it would unfit them for their duties, they would become impudent and above their business.” The interests of slavery defiled and in many cases blunted the central evangelical aim of Protestant Christianity in half the United States.

In the social realm, where the defining institution of the young Republic was marriage and the nuclear family, slavery’s corrosive effects in the South were perhaps most damaging—and, therefore, most often denied. For the enslaved, family ties could be sundered whenever a slaver decided to sell a mother, father, son, or daughter. The majority of antebellum slave narratives recount at least one such sale in the narrator’s own family. Some slaveholders allowed or even encouraged their human property to marry, but everyone knew these marriages

had no legal standing. Many male slaveholders were as indifferent to their own marriage vows as they were to the sanctity of the marriages of their slaves. Mary Boykin Chesnut, wife of a slaveholding US Senator from South Carolina, confided to her diary in March 1861: “Like the patriarchs of old our men live all in one house with their wives and their concubines, and the mulattoes one sees in every family exactly resemble the white children—and every lady tells you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody’s household, but those in her own she seems to think drop from the clouds, or pretends so to think.”

With representative democracy, capitalism, Protestant Christianity, and marriage, slavery belongs among the five most influential institutions in the founding of the United States simply because slavery was so deeply rooted in the country that it distorted and subverted the other four. Today the United States is still swimming—and trying not to drown—in the noxious backwash of slavery.

One way to chart our course away from destructive misunderstandings of our national past is to consult the personal histories of African American men and women who resisted their enslavement and extricated themselves from it. Between 1840 and 1865, the quarter-century international heyday of the African American slave narrative, the narratives of former slaves such as Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, Josiah Henson, Sojourner Truth, and Solomon Northup captured the imagination and aroused the social conscience of thousands of readers across America, Great Britain, and Western Europe. Since the 1960s, scholars have revived the testimony of many other former slaves, from William Grimes in 1825 to Harriet Jacobs in 1861, so that readers today may learn more about the best and worst aspects of our national history. The great slave narratives of the antebellum United States reveal in chilling detail the depths of depravity into which slaveholding led many white people. The most inspiring features of the same narratives recount the fortitude, faith, bravery, and dignity of those who committed themselves to the highest ideals of America despite the crushing burden of slavery. How these men and women attained their freedom and then witnessed fearlessly against slavery when it was the law of the United States offers every reader a heroic model from a conflict-ridden past, fully deserving of memorials, if not monuments, in the present.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The subject of this book has been on my mind since Deborah H. Barnes made an observation about Frederick Douglass one summer morning in 1992 during a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar for College Teachers that I led while on the faculty at the University of Kansas. I can't begin to enumerate all the scholars, critics, writers, and students who have influenced my thinking on slavery and class in the antebellum South. Blyden Jackson introduced me to African American autobiography in a graduate seminar on that topic in the spring of 1970. For more than two decades the late Nellie McKay listened to my inchoate, often half-baked, ideas about the history of African American autobiography and encouraged me to continue that vein of research. When I started writing this book, I received valuable criticism and advice about this project from University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill English Department colleagues Rebecka Rutledge Fisher and James Thompson. Joycelyn Moody, Giulia Fabi, and Gabrielle Foreman took the project seriously in its nascent stages and gave me the benefit of their considerable expertise. John Ernest read an early version of a chapter and gave me his always insightful comments. Joy Goodwin volunteered to read a large part of an early draft, providing instructive reflections and encouragement. Two graduate seminars I conducted at UNC–Chapel Hill helped me explore class in early African American literature and learn from the questions posed and research papers submitted by students in those seminars.

Useful responses and recommendations came from colleagues on research leave with me in the fall 2012 at the Institute for the Arts and Humanities at UNC–Chapel Hill. Andrea N. Williams and other fellows at the National Humanities Center in 2018 offered valuable feedback on class in African American history during an informal discussion. David Blight, Ezra Greenspan, Carla Peterson, Jean Fagan Yellin, Mary Maillard, and Bryan Sinche answered questions, pointing me in fruitful directions. Anne Bruder and Sarah Boyd provided excellent research assistance. Jason Tomberlin and Ashley Werlinich at the

UNC-Chapel Hill Library prepared many of the images that appear in this book. Brian Gharala provided timely technical expertise. Susan Ferber of Oxford University Press improved the book in countless ways through her line-by-line editorial revisions of and recommendations about the manuscript. I owe a special, enduring debt of gratitude to Kari J. Winter, who patiently read the entirety of this long book in its first iteration and sent me illuminating, tough-minded, consistently constructive criticism of the most precious kind.

Several venues have provided particularly rewarding opportunities for researching and sharing my evolving thoughts about the subject of this book. Symposia at the University of Haifa (1997), the University of California–Riverside (1998), Peking University (1999), Pace University (2006), and the Autobiography across the Americas conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico (2013) let me articulate preliminary ideas about slavery and class. Invited lectures at the 2013 AISNA conference in Trieste, Italy, the University of Delaware in 2015, and Duke University in 2016 gave me opportunities to outline themes of this book to thoughtful and engaged audiences. Queries and comments during these occasions taught me a great deal. Fellowships from these UNC-Chapel Hill entities – the College of Arts and Sciences, the Office of the Provost, and the Institute for the Arts and Humanities – and from the Center for American Studies at the University of Heidelberg made possible sustained attention to researching, writing, and re-writing this book.

To my wife, Charron, who has patiently listened to, counseled, and encouraged me through the decades it has taken me to conceive, research, and write this book, I cannot express in words how deeply grateful I am. I thank my adult children, to whom this book is dedicated, for their interest in their father's work and the inspiration they have given me throughout their lives.

Slavery and Class in the American South

Introduction

Slaves and Privileges

In his 1857 autobiography *Twenty-Two Years a Slave, and Forty Years a Freeman*, Austin Steward (1794–1860), fugitive slave, merchant, teacher, and anti-slavery leader in New York, recalled “a grand dance” put on by a group of domestic slaves on a Virginia plantation near the one where Steward had been born and raised. On the night of the dance, all over the neighboring plantation “could be heard the rude music and loud laugh of the unpolished slave. It was about ten o’clock when the *aristocratic slaves* began to assemble, dressed in the cast-off finery of their master and mistress, swelling out and putting on airs in imitation of those they were forced to obey from day to day.”¹ “House servants were of course, ‘the stars’ of the party,” Steward continued. “All eyes were turned to them to see how they conducted, for they, among slaves, are what a military man would call ‘fugle-men.’ The field hands, and such of them as have generally been excluded from the dwelling of their owners, look to the house servant as a pattern of politeness and gentility. And indeed, it is often the only method of obtaining any knowledge of the manners of what is called ‘genteel society’; hence, they are ever regarded as a privileged class; and are sometimes greatly envied, while others are bitterly hated.”²

The ironic italics with which Steward deployed the term “aristocratic slaves” in his text suggest that at some point in his life the author had developed a negative attitude toward domestic slaves for “putting on airs” and otherwise lording it over “the field hands.” The son of his enslaver’s cook, Steward grew up working as a domestic slave himself, the “errand boy” in “the great house” of a wealthy Prince William County slaveholder on whose bedroom floor Steward slept each night of his childhood (26). Yet he seems to have believed that belonging to “a privileged class” of slaves was socially and morally suspect from the standpoint of unprivileged field hands. Nevertheless, Steward acknowledged that field hands also “greatly envied” domestic slaves. No doubt the “cast-off finery” of upper-crust whites donned by domestic slaves impressed enslaved agricultural



Fig. I.1 Austin Steward, frontispiece to *Twenty-Two Years a Slave, and Forty Years a Freeman* (1857). Courtesy of Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill University Library.

laborers whose wardrobes consisted largely of drab outdoor work clothing. For agricultural laborers, the only way of learning from the movers and shakers of white Southern society was to consult their enslaved counterparts in the big house. Combining both desirable material resources and social sophistication could easily make domestic slaves seem like a privileged class in the eyes of those lacking access to such advantages.

The sumptuous event came to a tragic end after armed white patrollers attacked the merry-makers late at night. The county patrol, Steward noted, “had long had an eye on” the slaves whose wealthy and “indulgent master” had given them permission to hold the dinner and dance. These black men and women were “better fed, better clad, and had greater privileges” than any other slaves Steward had encountered in Virginia. Such advantages probably aroused envy and resentment among the poorly fed and shabbily clothed white patrollers. Not surprisingly, the patrol amply gratified its yearning “to flog some of ‘those pampered niggers,’ who were spoiled” and needed to be taught a lesson.³

Steward's account of the dance and feast presided over by what he termed a privileged class of domestic slaves is one of the more intriguing examples of commentary on slavery and class in the antebellum African American slave narrative. As he recounted the incident, Steward offered his readers insights into its contested intraracial as well as interracial social terrain. Steward explained why the domestic workers on this Virginia plantation could be considered privileged when the resources and access to information at their disposal were contrasted to those of agricultural laborers on the same plantation. Steward's account of the violent reprisals unleashed by the patrollers showed readers that the domestic workers' privileged status was real, but very limited. They were still subject to life-and-death white power. As Steward recounted the motives of the patrollers, he drew implicit parallels between them and the enslaved field workers. Both groups had reason to take offense at the sight of slaves whose access to food, clothing, and social advantages obviously out-classed those, whether black or white, whose poverty and lack of social standing made the domestic slaves seem privileged indeed.

Steward's use of the term "privileged" to describe the domestic slaves on a neighboring Virginia plantation was deliberate and nuanced. Privileges signified material or social benefits that virtually all slaves desired and valued. However, judging a slave to be enviably privileged said as much about the socioeconomic status of the person making the judgment as it did about the status of the privileged slave. The material resources, special manners, and comparative social sophistication of the domestic workers, no matter how gaudy or merely imitative they may have seemed to their white enslavers, could remind both enslaved blacks forced to labor in the fields and poor whites obliged to do the dirty work of white elites of just how few resources and how little social standing they had. Yet even a privileged class of slaves was still enslaved, still subject to deadly white supremacist authority.

More ambiguous in Steward's account was what he meant by "class." Readers are left to wonder if Steward thought that the material resources and social advantages that the house servants could marshal put them in a socioeconomic class superior to a field-hand class. Alternatively, by "class" Steward may have meant only that the house servants belonged to a set of enslaved persons who had something in common—most obviously, the kind of work they did—that distinguished them from other sets of enslaved persons who did different kinds of work. Steward's narrative is ultimately unclear as to whether he believed that privileges could or did divide the enslaved, whether on one Virginia plantation or more widely across the antebellum South, into hierarchical social strata.

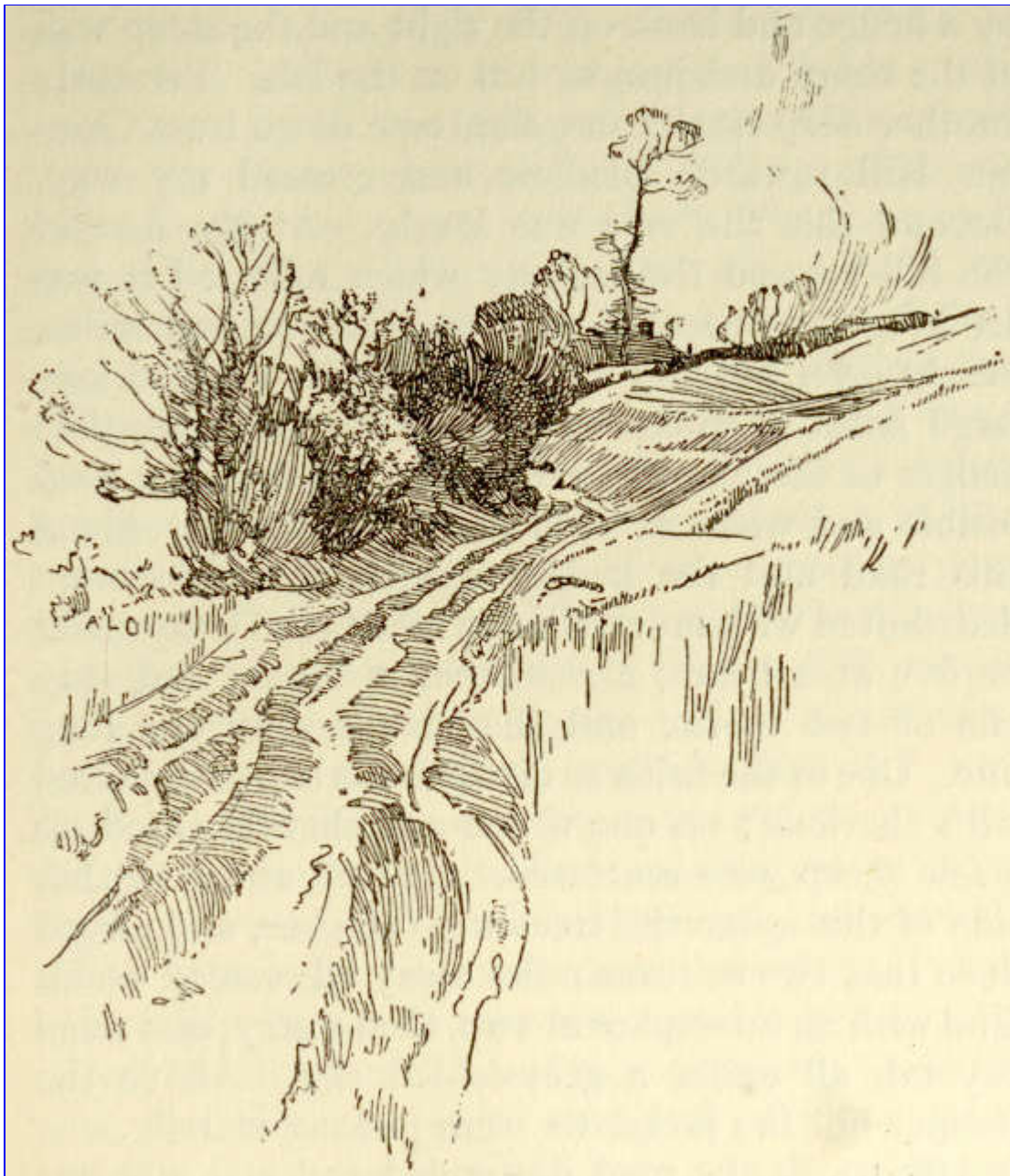
The idea of an identifiable group of enslaved workers forming a privileged class in the antebellum American South was not Steward's alone. William Wells Brown, one of the most eminent fugitive slave narrators of the nineteenth

Visit <https://ebookmass.com> today to explore

a vast collection of ebooks across various genres, available in popular formats like PDF, EPUB, and MOBI, fully compatible with all devices. Enjoy a seamless reading experience and effortlessly download high-quality materials in just a few simple steps. Plus, don't miss out on exciting offers that let you access a wealth of knowledge at the best prices!

Exploring the Variety of Random Documents with Different Content

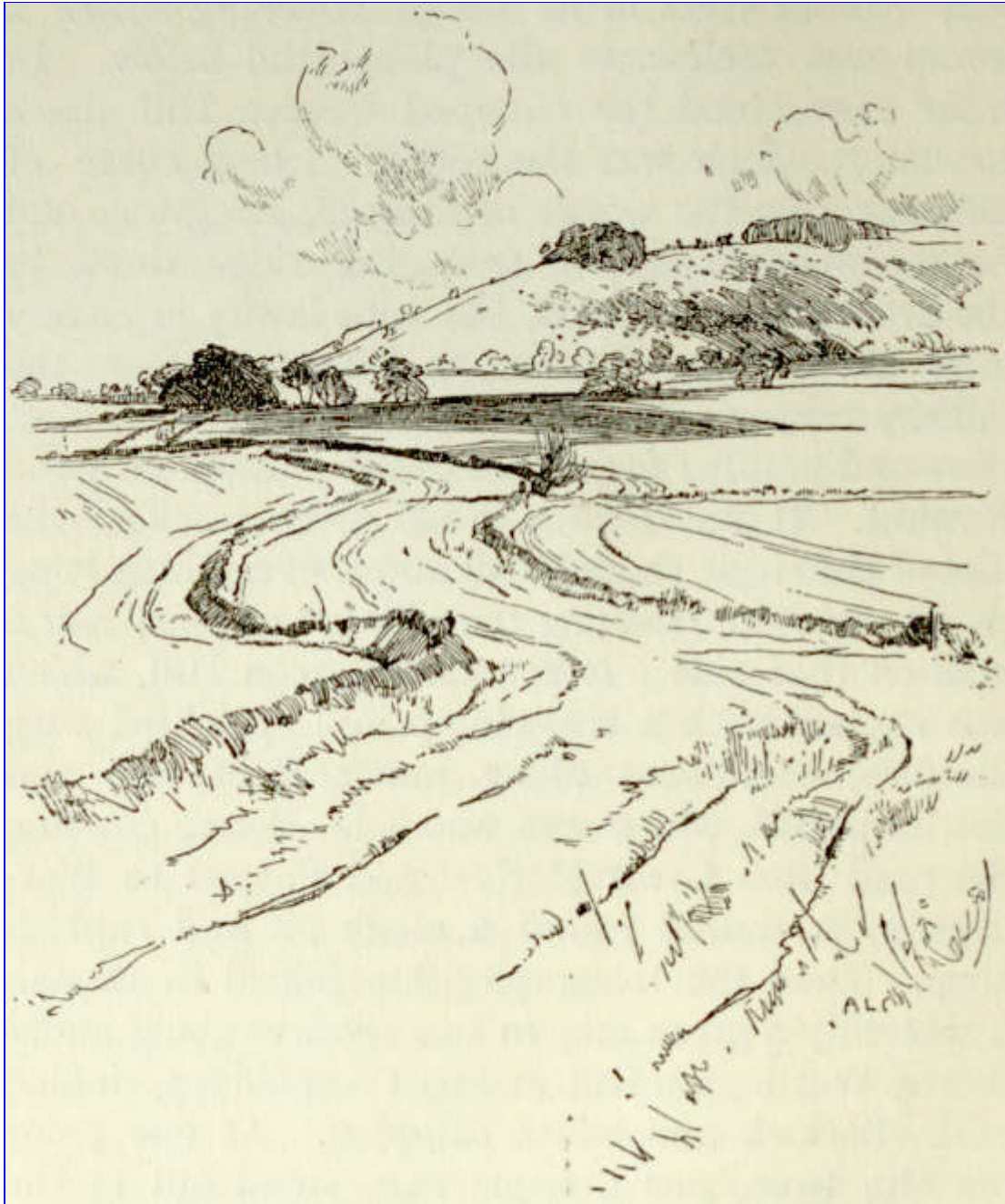
they made only one long line. One of the fields so divided was lemon-coloured with charlock; on one which was slightly tilted up a few sheep were scattered. Beyond and on either side of this space the trees were thicker, and closed in so that two or three miles away all seemed woodland with an interspace or two, then a grey, dim ridge beyond, all under a grey-folded sky. Above the juniper hill the jackdaws were jacking merrily.



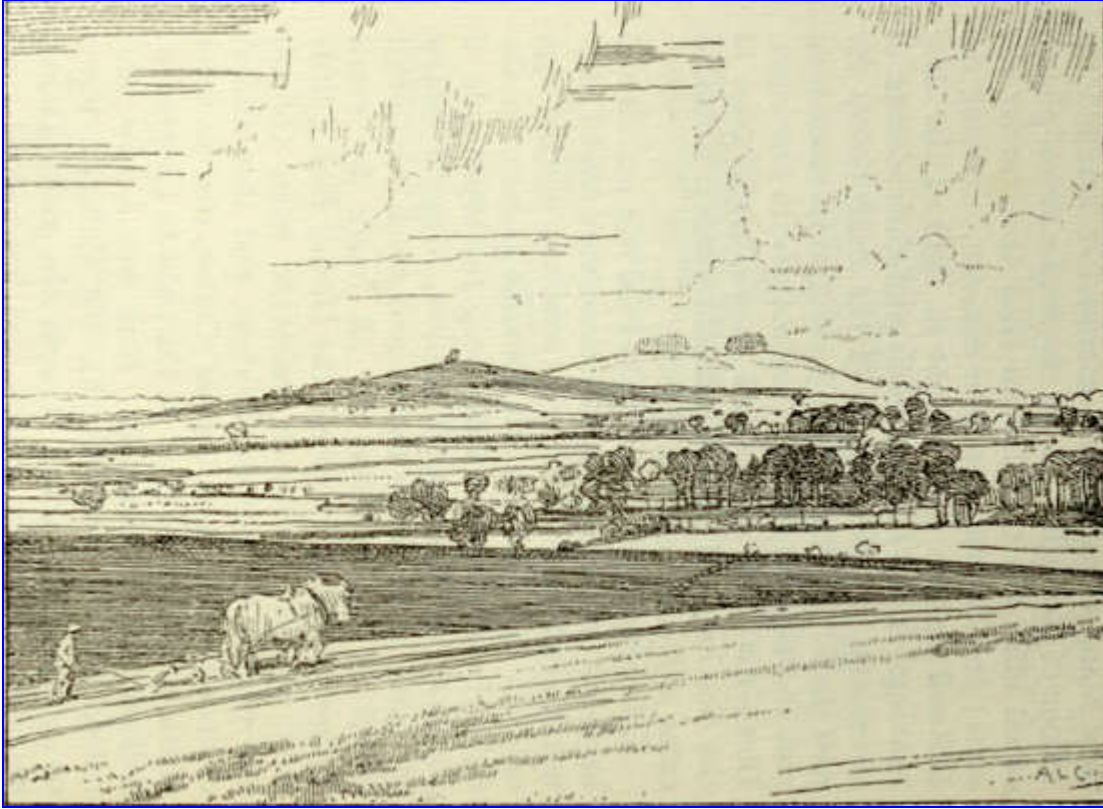
Near the "Leather Bottle."

Afterwards the road descended and was a green-hedged line with a narrow ploughed field between it and the edge of the juniper. Above Chinnor it was for a long way almost straight, broad and green, with elms in the left hedge. Here the Chilterns had beeches on the upper slope and dots of juniper below. Suddenly after this straightness the way had to descend a little over undulating ground, and it wriggled ahead confusedly, narrow and without trees in its hedge, widening where a hump was useless, to the ploughland below. In front now stood the clumped Beacon Hill above Lewknor, which was the end of a long curve of hills carrying the woods of Crowell, Kingston, and Aston, woods reaching from the ridge down to the arable in most parts, but with lawny or chalky intervals. At the crossing to Kingston Blount the railway came up to my road and from there went close and parallel for a mile to the station of Aston Rowant. It was here a broad green track at the foot of the slope, though still above everything lying on its right, and leaving the villages at least half a mile on that side. It rounded Beacon Hill, which was capped with a tree-clump and sprinkled with junipers, and went along under Bald Hill and Shirburn Hill, which was wooded. Before crossing the road from Great Marlow and Fingest to Watlington, it wound round a chalk pit and rubbish heap. Then the telegraph-posts joined it, though it was only a green lane in two terraces going under thorny Watlington Hill, and past cornfields sprinkled with charlock and white campion. At one point ten elm trees, one a triple tree, stood out in the middle of the wide green trackway. Beyond the road from Nettlebed the way was white between high, level green banks, and then long grass, thistles, and thorns in a thicket, before coming to the elm-shaded pond where a lane goes up on the left under more elms to Dame Alice Farm. Then it narrowed and widened again among nettles and elder, and a little farther it became a company of four parallel grooves paved with the pure down turf, a little silver-weed, and thyme. The undulations of the cornland were bolder now towards Britwell Salome, and in a hollow a roof nestled among elms; beyond these were dim, low hills. A line of elm trees, now many

deep, now in narrow file, half hid the village of Britwell. Above my road a steam-plough stood idle; the men lay on their faces under the elms; and beyond was their caravan. Crossing the Britwell Salome road I came in sight of the clear heavings of the Sinodun Hills and their clumps of trees, and the dim length of the main downs far past them. Britwell House, looking at its monument and Swyncombe Downs, lay a little to the right. Down the slope of the hill at the north edge of the beeches and firs of Icknield Bank Plantation came a Danish entrenchment.



Icknield Way, near Watlington.



Sinodun Hill.

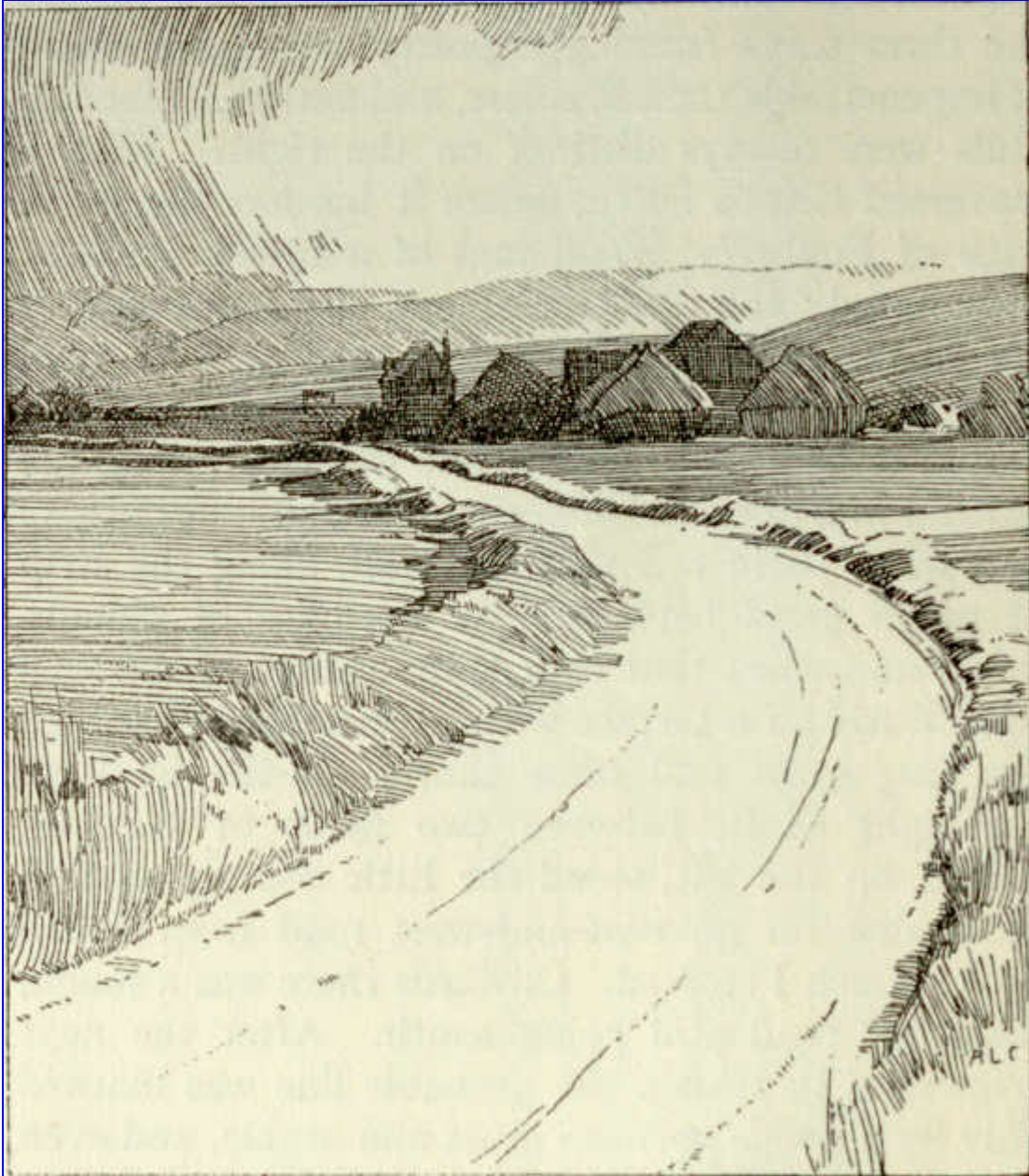
Emerging from the trees the road was narrow and hard, but sent a green branch southward over Littleworth Hill, and the adjacent land was equally high on both sides, on the left Ewelme Downs, on the right Huntingland. I went along the south side of Ewelme Cow Common, a shallow, irregular hollow of grass, with many thorns and much bird's-foot trefoil in it, bounded on all hands by roads without hedges. I entered the Henley road a little west of the fourteenth milestone from Oxford, and turned along it to the right, and then almost at once to the left at Gipsies' Corner, and so went south, avoiding the road on the right to Crowmarsh Gifford and Wallingford. Here was a new land before me, of sweeping corn, big thatched barns on a low ridge above it, and the main Downs beyond. It was a narrow and low-hedged road that kept away from the low, elmy Thames land on the west. Over the hazels and elders of its hedgerows climbed roses and bryony. Between Oakley Wood and Coldharbour Farm it made southward, crossing the Nettlebed and Crowmarsh and Nuffield and Crowmarsh roads within a few yards;

the three ways framing a pretty triangular waste of impenetrable thorns, elders, and nettles. Sinodun Hills were always distinct on the right. Then I traversed Grim's Ditch, where it borders the south edge of Foxberry Wood and of a broad, herbless ploughland; the ditch being on the south side of the bank. In half a mile I crossed another road from Crowmarsh, going south-east. There my way ceased to be a road, but its line was clear along the natural wall of earth between upper and lower fields; and when there was no more wall, along the strip of rough grass between two stretches of ploughland; and when that ended, the course of the way was clearly on a terrace with a central path through the long grass and some thorns on the bank to the right of it, between two fields of sainfoin. Ahead, on the left, stood the little solitary church of Ipsden on an east-and-west road from North Stoke which I crossed. Onwards there was a rough, hedgeless road still going south. After the next cross-road to Ipsden the probable line was marked only by a hedge between grass and arable, and even that gave out for the last fifty yards before entering the Mongewell road. Over this road a gap in the hedge might have been used when the road had dwindled to a footpath going to Glebe Farm, which is on a road now largely used to connect Brazier's Park with Goring. I thought I saw the ghost of it coming down to Glebe Farm, though amidst corn. This road to Goring is henceforward along the course of the Icknield Way. It is a hard and hedgeless road, winding and undulating through corn that rises on either hand to crested ridges. It passed Icknield Farm, crossed the South Stoke and Woodcote road, and went up as Catsbrain Hill to where I saw below me the red roofs and walls of suburban Cleeve and the Berkshire downs, their woods and pastures, beyond. The road dipped, and at the cross-road below was lost in streets and building land. Therefore I turned west along the cross-road, and then south again to Goring, the ford, and Streatley. Goring and Streatley railway station, and the cutting and the new houses have probably covered up where they have not destroyed all traces of the Icknield Way. But there is a Ferry Lane leading down to the towing-path and river, to where there was a ferry before the bridge, and a "Roman" ford over the gravelly bottom before that. On the opposite side Streatley

Vicarage and its lawn lie across the probable way, but beyond them a path continuing the line of Ferry Lane goes straight up to the Reading road a quarter mile south of the "Bull." I went into Goring Church and churchyard, and was pleased with the names of "John Lammass" and of "James, Ann, and Ruth Thresher" on tombstones. What clear visages of men and women these call up, each perfect in its way, shorn of the uncertain, vague, or incongruous elements of the living! By a kind of art the mere names in the churchyard sketch the characters. I have seen mere names that suggested as much as those two beautiful verses express which Mr. Walter de la Mare, the author, calls "An Epitaph":—

Here lies the most beautiful lady,
Light of step and heart was she;
I think she was the most beautiful lady
That ever dwelt in the West Countrie.

But beauty vanishes; beauty passes;
However rare—rare it be;
And when I crumble who will remember
This lady of the West Countrie?



Near Cleeve.

I have seen some that had in them no touch of death except the word, and that did no more than make a rustle and a shadow in the beauty as death does in the same poet's "Three Cherry Trees":—

There were three cherry trees once
Grew in a garden all shady;
And there for delight of so gladsome a sight
Walked a most beautiful lady,
Dreame'd a most beautiful lady.

Birds in those branches did sing,
Blackbird and throstle and linnet,
But she walking there was by far the most fair—
Lovelier than all else within it,
Blackbird and throstle and linnet.

But blossoms to berries do come,
All hanging on stalks light and slender,
And one long summer's day charmed that lady away
With vows sweet and merry and tender,
A lover with voice low and tender.

Moss and lichen the green branches deck,
Weeds nod in its paths green and shady;
Yet a light footstep seems there to wander in dreams,
The ghost of that beautiful lady—
That happy and beautiful lady.

As if I had not had enough of it in passing through, I walked out again to Cleeve, and looked at the blocks of red brick houses. Only people with immortal souls could be content with houses like those. For a man without an immortal soul, but a few senses for a substitute, a house like one of these is, to use one poor word instead of a dozen better ones, unsuitable. I have lived in three, and one of them would compete with any house at Cleeve for the title of The Red Brick House.

The Red Brick House was a raw naked building in the county of Kent with a triple bay window to left and right of the front door, and,

above these, two large windows and a small one in the middle; on one side there were no windows, on the other only one very small one low down; the back was flat and had a door between a large window and a small, and three windows above. The roof was of slate and low-pitched, and there was a stack with three chimney pots at either side of the house, and a single chimney at the back.

The house stood in a level, oblong piece of land cut out of a large field by posts and wire, and separated from the road by a cheap but rustic fence. There were two other buildings of the same species within two hundred yards, all looking across the same road between elm trees to a ploughed field, many hedges, a rise of orchard land, and some heavy wooded hills at the horizon. For the sake of the houses the elms on their side had been felled and taken away. Breaking-down, temporary fowl-houses were littered about two of the gardens, which someone had begun to dig once upon a time, and even to plant and sow; but there was not a living tree in either of them.

The soil was light. There was no higher ground in the near neighbourhood, and it had therefore been chosen as the site of a square water-tank, imperfectly sequestered among elms close to the house. To the south the view was gentle and perfect, especially when the blossom snow hung in the orchards and the sky was milky soft above the dark woods of the horizon. At the lower edge of these woods stood a white house that was always mysterious, even though it was often seen from a gateway not a hundred yards distant. The Downs flowed to the north. Eastward and westward the last undulations of the Downs could be seen beyond orchards and elms.

The village clustered round a triangular green half a mile away, and in the woods on the slope from the Red Brick House down to the Green, several bigger houses half hid themselves, looking toward the far Downs and the orchard rise. Many other folds of the land held cottages in groups, farm-houses and their spreading dependencies, conical oast-houses, single or sociable, and not a few churches; yet

from the Red Brick House only the White House at the wood's edge was visible when the leaves were on the elms of the hedges, on the orchards, and on the oak and beech of the copses and greater woods.

All other houses that I have known, beautiful, plain, dear, hateful, or dull, have been somehow subdued and made spiritual houses in course of time and of memory. The Red Brick House is the only unconquerable one. To this day it remains a body, and dead. Its fires are black grates that burnt coal. Its walls are wall-paper in strips at a certain price. Its garden is still mere hard ground to be dug (and to grow chiefly the inexorable couch-grass). I saw a beautiful spring come into the world from that house: spring passed down the elms on the opposite side of the road, led one morning by a wry-neck screaming loud in the tops of the trees. Pewits came to the ploughed field beyond, and tossed in the sunny wind, as I would have done in such days of March, had I been a bird. Beautiful autumn, beautiful spring, beautiful summer, triumphed round about that building. Many days can I remember from those seasons, a February day, for example—a pale morning after a night of lashing rain, a pale, still morning. The puddles, the ruts of the cartways, the smooth surface of the winding roads, glistened in the brown, ploughed world. The Downs were clear and dark and hard under a silver-clouded blue sky, and far beyond them were the upper ridges of small mountainous clouds of a yellowish and sunlit white. Very sombre were the woods. Each thing was dark or bright; all was fresh and cold. Suddenly a bee twanged through the air to a snowdrop on the south side of the Red Brick House. Inside the house a subtle devil was refusing to let a soul enter into its walls—a subtle but a bodiless and soulless devil, negative and denying. During the nine years since it was built eight families had sojourned in the house, and had not given it a soul; nor had the several intervals of vacancy given it a ghost.

Sometimes death will give a soul to a house. I once saw the soul of a dead man given to a new little house with a verandah. The swifts were racing to and fro between the rows of new houses. They flew just above the level of men's hats, except when they turned with a

rapier-like twist up into the air. While they raced they screamed continually shrill screams of a fierce hilarity. There were half a hundred of them all flying as upon the surface of an invisible stream surmounted by a few black, bobbing hats, or, very rarely, an upturned white face; and no part of the streets was for more than a second without a crescent black wing and a shriek. They had taken possession of the town. Under their rush and cry the people in the streets were silent, walking blankly and straight ahead, and all looking old in contrast with the tumultuous and violent youth of the birds. The thought came into my head as I was passing the last of the houses that even so must the birds have been racing and screaming when the Danes harried this way a thousand years ago, and thus went they over the head of Dante in the streets of Florence. In the warriors and in the poet there was a life clearly and mightily akin to that in the bird's throat and wing, but here all was grey, all was dead.

When I came to the bridge leading over the railway to the meadows I stood and watched the birds flying beneath me, above the slowly curving metals; for I could not tire of the wings and voices that ripped the dead air, and I crossed to the other parapet to see how far they went in the opposite direction. Then for the first time I noticed a house built almost at the edge of the bank which fell steeply down to the railway. Only the cutting separated it from the town, and beyond it could be seen nothing but trees lining the road, and fields on either side as far as the woods of the horizon. It was the last house of the town, and one of the newest. Not being in a street it needed not to be exactly like the rest, square, pierced with oblong windows on two sides, and blank on the other two; but so it was, except that its lower windows looked across the railway between the thin, white posts of a verandah. A strip of garden, not more than equal to it in area, surrounded the house, and this was enclosed by rusty iron railings upon all sides. Every window was shut, and the light and air blocked out by venetian blinds painted grey. The white paint of the window frames and the verandah was dirty, but the red bricks of the walls were still harshly new and

untouched by vegetation or any stain. The garden had never been cultivated: it was given over to long grasses of the unhealthy rankness peculiar to soil which is composed of builders' refuse, and the stalks were matted and beaten down so as to suggest the soaked hair of something dead. The door and gate were shut. The verandah and the white paint gave the building a pretentious air of being a pleasure house; yet it looked over the railway at the back parts of the town, at the railway station on one hand, at the cemetery and a tall chimney on the other. It had apparently not been occupied or for a little time only, and was now empty; or it had been used for a month at a time by perhaps half a dozen families; certainly it had never become a house; it was the corpse, the stillborn corpse of a house.

Beyond it, between the two lines of elms and on either side of them, was the open country. The road was old, too, worn down like a river-bed into the sandy soil, and the elms above either side made it dark as it rose towards the north. I had not gone many yards along it when I came to a place where the bank had been excavated long ago. There was a smooth sandy floor, and behind that a firm wall of orange sand interlaced by the stony and snake-like roots of a great oak which towered up from the top of the wall; and behind the trunk the sun was a scarlet round in a dull sky at the moment of going down. It was dark and still in this hollowed place, and I had looked at it for some time before I heard the crying of a child and saw three children playing in the sand. Under the oak they had dug a cave in the sand, and a black-haired boy and a fair-haired girl were carrying away little spadefuls, while the third sat still among the roots. The two workers went silently backwards and forwards. They moved gravely and without a word, and I might have thought they were unaware of one another had they not made way for one another in their comings and goings. They worked as if in a dream and being moved by some unseen power. Their faces also were fixed and expressionless; their wide-open eyes seemed to be upon something which travelled always before them and was invisible to me. They were perhaps seven years old. The other was not more than three,

and he took no notice of them as he sat, his face smeared with tears and sand, and a paper bag upon his lap. Now and then he burst out into a fresh sobbing cry just as suddenly, and not more loudly than the robin singing above his head. When he did this the little girl went up to him and shook him gently, and took a cherry from the paper bag and put it into his mouth. At this he became silent again for a little, holding the cherry-stone in one hand, and with the other rubbing his eyes. When this cure had been tried several times, and the scarlet sun had gone down out of the dull heavens, the child began to cry more steadily, and it was in vain that a cherry was put into his mouth; for he held it a little while between his lips, and did not notice when it fell out, but sobbed on and on as if he saw nothing, heard nothing, thought nothing, felt nothing, but only sobbed.

I asked the little girl: "What is the matter with him?"

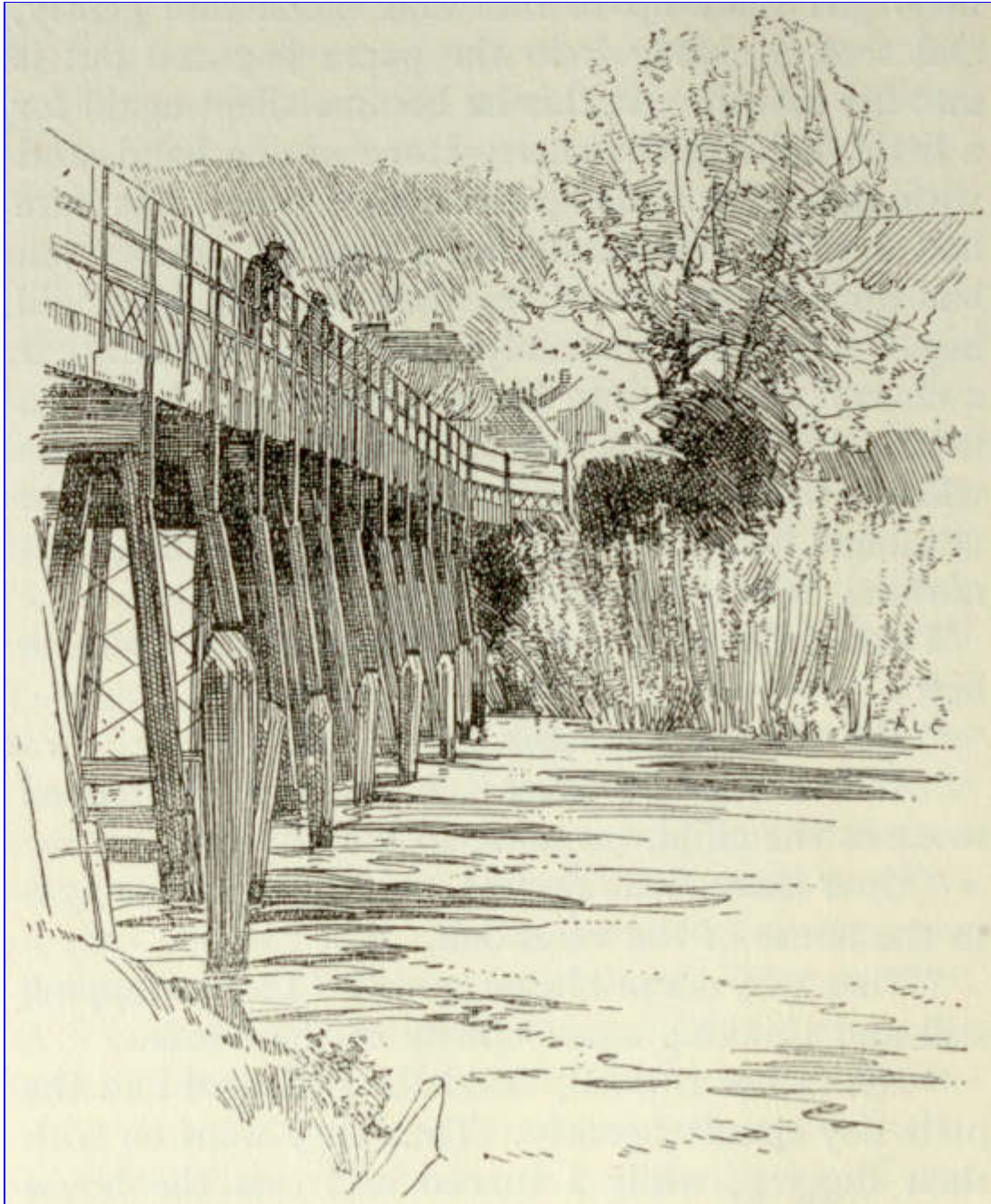
"He wants his mother," she said.

"Where does he live?" I asked, as I stepped towards the child, meaning to lift him up.

"Over there," she replied, pointing with her eyes to the house of the verandah.

"Then why doesn't he go home?" I said, stopping still and thinking again chiefly of the house.

"His father is dead," said the little girl and the little boy simultaneously. Then they went on with their digging, while I turned and saw the house looking as if it had grown suddenly old in those few moments—old and haggard, and so cold that I shivered to think how cold it must be in the death-room behind the venetian blinds. The silence of the house and road was like a sea suddenly expanding infinitely about me. As I turned away, the child's sob, the song of the robin, the scream of the swifts, fell into that dark silence without breaking it, like tears into a deep sea. And I looked at the house and saw that the soul of the dead man had entered it.



The Bridge at Goring.

Remembering this, I gave up my spiritual frivolity at Cleeve, and escaped to an inn. I suppose I had been too much taken with churchyard names in the grey evening to be quite fair to the living landlord at the inn. He was a short, heavy, fair-haired man, who had a too distinguished moustache, and talked through his nose, and had a straw hat tilted back on his neck. He and a wealthy

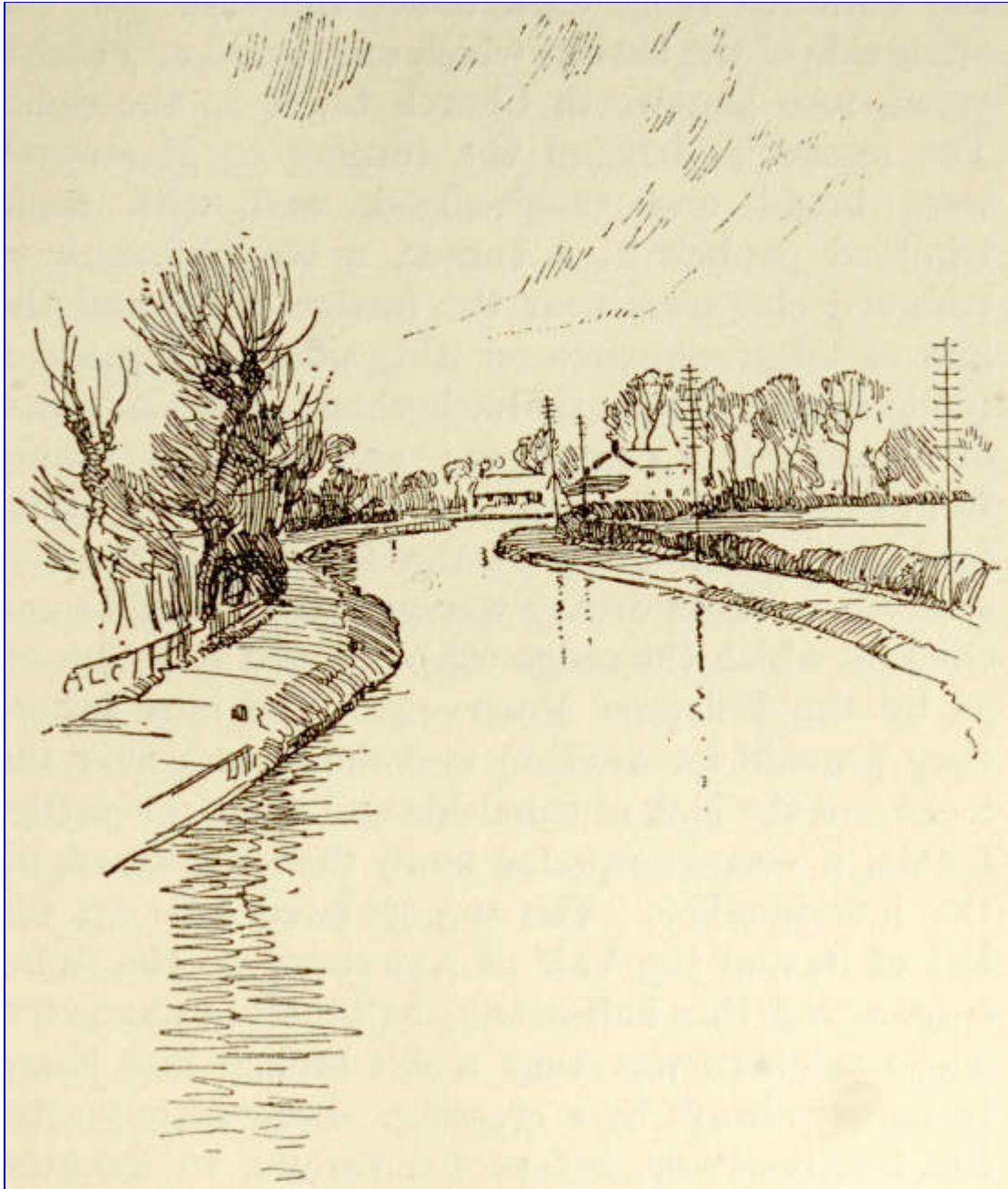
Scotchman were talking together, and invariably—by a slight effort—agreeing with one another. His little niece came in with a flag, but he successfully put her off by saying that he had a lot of things to show her by and by, and she ran away shouting: “Uncle has a lot of things to show me.” He explained to the Scotchman that he really had—“flags and things for the coronation”—“must do something”—“everybody will”—“have spent half a sovereign”—“it isn’t much—but still....” The child, he said, was very excitable, not that there was anything wrong; oh, no; but she would make a wonderful actress. He asked the Scotchman what he would take, and then ordered two whiskies, which I understood the other to pay for. They talked of drinks and of champagne, of course. The landlord began laughing at “some *ladies*” who like it sweet. He implied huge contempt for a man who could like such stuff. Nevertheless, he hastened to say: “You don’t like sweet champagne?... No.... No, of course you don’t.... Oh, yes, well, tastes differ.” This naturally led to Freemasonry, and it turned out that the Scotchman had done everything as a Mason (except work in stone); had served as chairman, etc. etc., and the landlord showed great eagerness of admiration by saying: “Have you really?” several times. They returned to the subject of drink. The Scotchman announced that he took nothing but whisky, except when he had to. The landlord hastened to remark: “You are quite right. You’ll live the longer for it.” Then the landlord related how when he was three-quarters drunk he always found it so hard to drink champagne, which was only good, really, if you were run down, or for medicinal purposes. A very great deal of natural philosophy was uttered over those three or four glasses of whisky. After the Scotchman had gone the landlord was claimed by two young gentlemen who were staying under his roof for the fishing, boating, and alcoholic drinks. They called him “Arthur,” and lured him into frivolities which he was not born to, such as arranging a band with tennis rackets, etc., for instruments, and serenading the other visitors and the inhabitants of the surrounding houses. In the intervals they fortified themselves with his whisky to such an extent that his leniency towards its effect was not to be surprised at. They also took care to keep up their reputation of

commonplace luridity with the barmaid, a plain, hard-worked girl, whose smile—and, they evidently believed, everything else—was at their command. When he could slip away from these sportsmen the landlord straightened his hat and talked business to the barmaid with some anxiety and no false generosity. But they were always shouting for “Arthur” in shriller and more discordant voices until at last the second fiddle of the two burst through the door of his bedroom and rushed across and fell heavily on the other side. Then his leader went quietly to bed. The landlord turned to his accounts, and the barmaid went on washing up glasses.

CHAPTER VII

FIFTH DAY—IVINGHOE TO WATLINGTON, ON THE LOWER ICKNIELD WAY, BY ASTON CLINTON, WESTON TURVILLE, CHINNOR, AND LEWKNOR

I had to go back to the forking of the Icknield Way and follow the Lower road from Ivinghoe. St. Mary's Church at Ivinghoe stands pleasantly among sycamores and beeches, and next door to a small creeper-covered brewery which is next door to a decent creeper-covered house with round-topped windows and a most cool and comfortable expression. Some stout and red-faced men stood talking outside the brewery in cheerful mood. On the opposite side of the road was a green enclosed by a low railing. The village was a straggling one, and there were many newish houses, of pale brick here and there, as well as old timbered cottages. I went into a grocer's shop at the moment when they were killing a pig on the other side of the wall. Neither the shrieking nor the end of it disturbed the stout proprietor cutting up lard and the women talking of the coronation.



Grand Junction Canal.

The road was a dull, straight one going south-westwards over the London and North Western Railway a mile north of the Upper road, and two and a half miles north-west of Tring station. It passed allotment gardens and had the company of heavy-laden telegraph-posts, whose wires cut across the terraces or "lincs" of Southend Hill on the right. But if the corn-bunting sang its curst dry monotony on the telegraph-wire a blackbird also sang in an oak. Beyond the

railway the road was better and had level green edges up to the roses of the high hedge on the right and the low one on the left, over which I could see across the oats to the Chilterns lying dark under the sun. On the other side of the barley, which was a cold and bluish green, rose Marsworth Church tower to the right. The reservoirs beyond the turning to Marsworth were broad and rough-edged, and with some trimmed poplars at a corner, a straight rank of trimmed elm trees near the further edge, and the line of telegraph-wires on this side, they made a foreign scene, against the background of the Chilterns, of a fascinating dreariness; one man was fishing from the bank. Crossing the canal I was in Hertfordshire, which I left at the far side of the last reservoir. These dreary waters had attracted some thickets which the sedge-warbler loved and sang in, as by the Wilstone Reservoir. The inns (where they provide for anglers) and the houses near the locks had the look of canalside and wharfside settlements, a certain squalor more than redeemed by the individuality. The unpopulated hills on the left of it, and the Vale of Aylesbury on the right, emphasized this half-urban, half-marine character. The road here was very much broken into sharp turns not always by a crossing. Immediately after the last reservoir, before the turning to Drayton Beauchamp, the road was at its best, winding between not too level green edges of unequal breadth, and hedges of thorns and roses and a few ash trees; and on the edges the grass had been cut and was lying across the low clover. Doves cooed and a lark overhead sang "as if he never would be old." Then, at a bend where a ditch came in and had a willow above it and some meadow-sweet round about, a sedge-warbler was singing, the soul of a little world ten yards across. The crossing of the road to Drayton was one I shall not forget. The signpost pointed back to Ivinghoe, forward to Aylesbury, Buckland, and Aston Clinton, on the right to Puttenham, on the left to Drayton. There was a small crook to the left before my road went forward again. In the midst of the meeting ways the signpost had a green triangle to stand on. Also, each road had green borders which all widened to the crossing; some of the borders had rushes. The road to Puttenham swelled up a little and fell, and over the rim showed the trees of the vale. Ahead and to the left were the

Welcome to our website – the perfect destination for book lovers and knowledge seekers. We believe that every book holds a new world, offering opportunities for learning, discovery, and personal growth. That's why we are dedicated to bringing you a diverse collection of books, ranging from classic literature and specialized publications to self-development guides and children's books.

More than just a book-buying platform, we strive to be a bridge connecting you with timeless cultural and intellectual values. With an elegant, user-friendly interface and a smart search system, you can quickly find the books that best suit your interests. Additionally, our special promotions and home delivery services help you save time and fully enjoy the joy of reading.

Join us on a journey of knowledge exploration, passion nurturing, and personal growth every day!

ebookmasss.com